

The President's 'Military Adviser'

Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, now conducting a study of the nation's intelligence activities while on leave as president of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, has many talents, including an eager, questing mind. As Army Chief of Staff from 1955 to 1959 he fought for a strengthened limited-war capability, an objective now accepted in the Kennedy Administration. His personal attributes and extensive experience are qualifications for nearly any post President Kennedy might ask him to fill.

There are, however, two dangers implicit in the role of "White House military adviser."

One is that the post, no matter how labeled, might become a *de facto* monolithic single chief of staff, a development expressly forbidden by the National Security Act. There are suggestions that this concept of the role is being supported by some of the President's advisers, despite the fact that the law—and Congressional intent—endow the Joint Chiefs of Staff with both authority and responsibility and make them collectively the principal military advisers to the Secretary of Defense and the President.

The second danger is one that has been emphasized by the first months of the Kennedy Administration. The numerous White House advisers, endowed with great authority but no legal responsibility, have already played equivocal roles in the Cuban fiasco, in the development of Latin-American policies and in other roles. Some of them, instead of being staff aides, have assumed operational and policy responsibilities at the expense of the State and Defense Departments. A high-ranking military aide, endowed with White House authority, might well compound confusion, rather than eliminate it, if the office proved to be another echelon interposed between the Commander in Chief and the Pentagon.